

THE SIXTH DAY.

4th March 1922.

The Assembly met at 11-35 A. M. on Saturday, the 4th March 1922.

58. Irrigation in Edanad.

Mr. Simeon Fletcher (Member, Nominated) said that irrigation was a subject of vital importance to the people of Edanad, comprising those portions of the Eraniel and Vilavankod taluks which had not yet been helped by any irrigation scheme. In point of material resources this tract of land was peculiarly unfortunate as compared with other parts of the State, especially Nanjinad and portions of the Kalkulam and Eraniel taluks commanded by the Kodayar Project, and suffered from want of rainfall and consequent lack of material resources. The wet lands of Edanad covered an area of nearly 10,000 acres (about 1/10 of the whole area), the condition of the people was one of extreme indigence owing to frequent droughts, and it was a pitiable sight to see the sowing of seeds at every rainfall not being rewarded with harvest or even remission of tax in the event of failure of crop. The Member described the physical features of the country as being made up of alternate ridges and valleys defying the efforts of private agencies to store up river water till the harvest; and irrigation was carried on by means of shallow tanks. The outturn of the crops could be greatly increased with consequent enhancement of the State revenue if river water could be supplied to those tanks. He next referred to other methods of obtaining water, viz., the sinking of wells and the raising of water from the Tamravarni, and observed that the first was next to impossible and not serviceable for irrigation, as the water strata in those parts were at very great depths varying from 75 to 150 feet. The other alternative was to raise water from the Tamravarni river to a higher level by means of an anicut across the Kodayar which would render it feasible to feed the tanks below which, having been silted up, stood in need of restoration. The Member advocated a diversion dam at Vannampara with two small channels and stated that it would serve about 8,000 acres of wet lands. The subject had engaged the serious attention of Dewan Mr. Nanoo Pillai, Dewan Raja Sir. T. Madhava Rao, Mr. Thanu Pillai and of expert Engineers like Major Mead and Horsley in whose opinion the anicut by itself would cost only Rs. 50,000, while the anicut and the two channels would not cost more than 2½ lakhs of rupees. An area of 8,000 acres of wet land devoid of canal irrigation would be benefited thereby and another area of 1,000 acres of dry land could be brought under cultivation. The Member opined that the scheme promised a fair financial return. By the levy of a water cess of Re. 1 per acre for the existing wet lands, the income would be Rs. 8,000, and when a further area of 1,000 acres of dry lands was brought under cultivation, a water cess of Rs. 7,000 might be realised at the rate of Rs. 7 per acre. The outlay, he said, would bring in an interest of six per cent.

Dewan's reply.—Your part of the country is not so fortunate as some other parts of the country, especially the area commanded by the Kodayar channels. I am afraid that nature is against you. The configuration of the country is chiefly responsible for this condition. You refer to the Vannampara anicut, and you have given estimates of the probable cost. I am not half so sanguine as you in that matter. The Vannampara anicut was investigated along with the Kodayar scheme and given up as too costly and unremunerative. You have quoted Mr. Horsely and other old engineers. From the quotations, I gather that they were merely the impressions of those gentlemen and not their considered opinions given after due investigation. The Chief Engineer, however, says that he is prepared to order another rough investigation of the Project and see whether there are any new circumstances which would render a detailed investigation profitable. I shall direct him to make the rough investigation.

You said that you did not get remission for failure of crops. Wherever there is a case for remission it can be claimed under the rules. I remember that, during the south-west monsoon this year when there was shortage of rains, I asked the Peishkars of both the Trivandrum and Padmanabhapuram Divisions to direct the Tahsildars to make a field-to-field inspection before the crop was removed, and that, I believe, has been done. But in the Kodayar area there was no necessity to do so because the crop was saved by timely rains. Individual cases of remission should certainly be considered, and the Peishkars have the power to grant such remissions under the remission rules. In cases in which remissions are not granted, the matter may be taken on appeal to the Land Revenue Commissioner and the Government. In your taluk, remission is granted as a matter of course under the rules. In Central and North Travancore remission is granted only as a special favour on occasions of widespread calamity.

Member.—I would request you to see the Vannampara site.

Dewan.—I have seen the Vannampara anicut site and the remains of the old anicut. I am a lay man and I can say nothing about it. It is a matter for professional investigation. It is the work of experts to take levels and prepare estimates.

59. Irrigation in Travancore with special reference to the Vilavankod Taluk.

Mr. R. Narayana Pillai (Member, Vilavankod Taluk) stated at the outset that the country produced only two-thirds of the rice in actual demand, while for the remaining one-third it depended on foreign countries. Though major irrigation in the Southern Division depended on the Kodayar, he said that minor irrigation was not receiving adequate attention at the hands of Government as of old and that, as the Government revenue increased, the amount spent on minor irrigation, instead of proportionately increasing, steadily decreased. In support of this he quoted the figures of expenditure on minor irrigation works from 1082 to 1096. The Member expressed the gratitude of the people of his taluk for the grant of an English High School and for the orders issued in regard to the restoration of minor irrigation works. 98 per cent of the people of the taluk were agriculturists and the area under minor irrigation in the taluk was 6,207 acres. The Member said that (1) the amount of Rs. 30,000 sanctioned in 1097 for the restoration of minor irrigation tanks in the Neyattinkara and Vilavankod taluks was inadequate as far as his taluk was concerned, (2) that it was beyond their capacity to pay interest at the rate of $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent on the amount equivalent to 50 per cent of the cost of restoration to be advanced by Government, (3) that the water cess of Re. 1 per acre for the maintenance of the works after restoration was too much for the people to bear and (4) that the Dewan Peishkar's present proposal in regard to the improvement of 10 minor irrigation tanks in the taluks was unsatisfactory.

The Member then requested that the work of restoring those tanks might be arranged to be carried out one after another by the prominent ryots holding lands in that area. He then urged the desirability of constructing an anicut at Vannampara or at least at the end of the Pamburi rock which, he said, would be very useful. In conclusion, he prayed that an investigation might be conducted by an expert officer and a non-official committee and orders issued on the basis of the decision of the majority.

Dewan's reply.—I am entirely in agreement with you in saying that minor irrigation demands greater attention from Government than it has had in the immediate past. You are well aware that, in regard to Vilavankod and Neyattinkara taluks, I have taken up this matter and held a conference, and you have also admitted that the reason for the delay in the execution of some works at least in these two taluks is the non-settlement of the terms relating to contribution, etc., by the ryots. I might have said that I would be prepared to spend about Rs. 70,000 for this part of the country, if arrangements could be made for the proper execution of the works. In Neyattinkara Government are prepared to spend more than